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AUTHOR Ottina, John R.
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ABSTRACT

Reviewed in the speech by John Ottina, the U.S. Commissioner of Education, are trends in the federal government's role in education for the handicapped and current federally funded projects serving the handicapped. Noted is program growth from subsidies for just two facilities 20 years ago to the current annual budget of $300 million to support education of the estimated seven million handicapped children. It is explained that $190 million goes to the states and another $100 million is used for a model program development in areas such as early childhood education, media development, and teaching training. Described are new federally supported efforts in research such as developing four new curricula for the mentally retarded child, in media such as captioning the ABC evening news, in program development such as establishing 10 centers to serve deaf blind children and, in an emphasis on early childhood programs to identify and remediate disabilities at the preschool level. Future trends in government involvement are seen to include provision of resources to State and local education agencies as they expand services for the severely handicapped, increased support of model preschool projects, model projects specifically designed to serve the severely handicapped, increased emphasis on the gifted and talented, and collection of better data on incidence and educational costs of various handicapping conditions. (DB)

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THE FEDERAL COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED*

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by
John R. Ottina
U. S. Commissioner of Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

Twenty years ago, in 1954, the Supreme Court in deciding the famous Brown vs. the Board of Education case, which began the era of Civil Rights in education, made this statement:

> "In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity where the State has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."

The other day I saw a poster hanging in Ed Martin's office which says in bold print, "The Next Civil Rights Movement". The poster goes on to say that the next Civil Rights movement "should be to fight for equal educational opportunity for our seven million handicapped children. They have just as much right to the education they need as the rest of our children, and millions of them are not getting it."

The challenge expressed by the poster, which urges people to write to our CLOSER LOOK program for information about educational opportunity for handicapped children, is the basis for Federal action in the area of education for handicapped children and is clearly a major theme of this convention.

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Twenty years ago, the Federal role in education for the handicapped was limited to a subsidy for Gallaudet College for the Deaf in Washin D.C., and for the American Printing House for the Blind in Lexington, Kentucky.

This year the Office of Education alone will provide approximately $300 million to support education for our estimated seven million handicapped children. Some 190 million of those dollars will go to the States under the Education of the Handicapped Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the Vocational Education Act.

Another $100 million will be available for model program development in such areas as early childhood education, for special programming for children with learning disabilities, for development of media in educational technology for the handicapped, for research and demonstration projects, and for support to more than 300 colleges and universities training teachers for the handicapped.

In addition, the Office of Child Development, which is in DHEW but not part of OE, will devote an estimated $30 million in Headstart funds to fulfilling a legal requirement that 10 percent of the children enrolled in Headstart programs be handicapped.

Most of you are familiar with the activities of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH), but I would like to take a moment to tell you about some of the progress in a few of the varied programs which are part of the Federal effort to stimulate full educational opportunity for handicapped children.

Research: Our research efforts over the past several years have resulted in at least four new curricula for the mentally retarded child. One called "Me Now" and another called "Me and My Environment" use film strips, slides, and tapes among other materials to teach life sciences to handicapped children in upper elementary and junior high school. "Project MORE" teaches handicapped children such basic self-care skills as toothbrushing, shaving, showering, and complexion care. "Project MORE" helps these children to become more self-sufficient and independent, qualities which we consider to be educational goals for all handicapped children. The fourth curriculum, the "Social Learning Curriculum," uses a behavior oriented approach to help mentally retarded children of elementary school age become more socially and occupationally competent. These programs are available commercially and are on exhibit at this Conference.

Media: We now support 14 demonstration projects to discover ways to enrich the educational experiences of handicapped children. One is Project LIFE, which uses programmed learning to improve the language abilities of deaf young people.

Another of our ventures, the ABC Captioned Evening News shown on educational TV stations along the east coast, makes it possible for thousands of deaf Americans to stay abreast of current events without having to read a newspaper from first to last. Next year we plan to caption the children's program "ZOOM".

Our long running captioned film program for the deaf continues meanwhile to be a success. Last year it reached nearly 2.9 million deaf persons with educational and entertainment films.

Deaf-Blind Programs: There are more than 5,000 deaf-blind children in the United States. To help them we have set up 10 deaf-blind centers throughout the country to provide diagnostic services, to give training and supportive services to parents and teachers, and, of course, to provide a range of educational services to children.

In the 1973-74 school year more than 3,000 parents have been counseled, and about 1,200 parents, teachers, and aides have received inservice training. This year too, 1,903 deaf-blind children have received full-time educational services, and 784 have received short-time or part-time services, from summer school to interim intensive care. The number of children receiving some form of educational services has increased by nearly 1,000 over last year. The benefits they have received as a result of their parents' and teachers' receiving training and counseling cannot be gauged in numbers, but the positive effect on the children is considerable.

Teacher Training: With only half of the Nation's handicapped children being served, the need for special education teachers could not be greater. We now have about 240,000 such teachers. If every handicapped child is to be given the opportunity to receive an appropriate education, approximately 500,000--more than double the present number--will be needed in the future. That is the motivating force behind our teacher training program.

We are encouraged by the growing number of highly motivated and compassionate young people who want to teach handicapped children. To help them on their way we now support a number of teacher training institutions which give direct financial aid to 19,000 students, many of them regular teachers being retrained as teachers of the handicapped.

Early Childhood: Many handicapped children who have participated in an early childhood program can now enter a regular kindergarten. Our early childhood program, which has been in operation for 5 years now, supports a wide range of projects for preschool-age handicapped children. Seventy-four model programs across the country work directly with children, and 17 "outreach" projects provide other projects with technical assistance, public information, legislative planning, and training. Last year 12,000 preschool children were screened to see whether they needed special education services. Some 4,600 are now receiving direct services under our early education projects, and 17,500 more are being served by programs modeled on our demonstration efforts.

NOW LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE FUTURE

Today 48 of the 50 States mandate education for handicapped children. Recent court decisions have affirmed the rights of handicapped children to treatment and to education, and the Education Commission of the States reports that education of the handicapped is listed as a priority by its member States more frequently than any other area of education.

We in the Federal Government are also working with the States to makes sure that handicapped children find a place in a school room. Just

a school room is not enough, however. Each handicapped child must also be given, in that school room, an education that will develop his or her particular abilities.

To do this we will continue to design Federal programs as resources to State and local education agencies as they expand services for handicapped children. We must operate our program of support for training teachers in such a way that the human resources necessary to carry out the full services goal will be available. We will need not only to train teachers in such shortage areas as the education of the multiple-handicapped child and of the emotionally disturbed child, but to focus attention on regular teachers, who may increasingly find handicappped children in their classroom.

All of us want to see that as many handicapped children as possible be educated in the same classroom as their non-handicapped peers. This will not happen, however, if regular classroom teachers are not willing or able to deal with the handicapped children who may be put in their charge.

We cannot justify a Federal program for training teachers if it just increases the number of teachers for the retarded and fails to take into account that rural areas, and inner city areas, need regular teachers sensitive to these children's particular needs.

On still another front, we will be increasing our cooperative activities with Headstart to see that handicapped children are appropriately identified and programmed in the Headstart program.

At present our model preschool projects provide technical assistance in a number of regions tc Headstart projects. One project in North Carolina is providing such assistance across the whole Southeast. Another, in Ohio, is providing assistance to midwestern States.

Still other programs in Vermont, Florida, Washington, and elsewhere are working as State training agencies. BEH has joined with the Office of Child Development in a number of activities designed to encourage and improve the quality of programming for Headstart children.

One thing that prevents the schools from providing an education for all handicapped children is that few educators really know how to educate the severely handicapped child. Even if a State is willing to do this, programs are frequently hindered by lack of experience and good models.

Within the next few weeks we will be announcing awards for model projects specifically designed to serve the severely handicapped. At present we have more than 10 specifically designed training projects, each paying specific attention to new ways of training teachers to deal with severely handicapped children.

We will expand our efforts in this direction to back up the activities stimulated by State law and by our model programs. In addition, we will be awarding several contracts in the area of telecommunications for severely handicapped children and youth who are homebound or confined to a hospital. We will also be expanding the number of deaf-blind children in full-time educational placement through the nationwide network of 10 deaf-blind centers.

Education of the gifted and talented child is becoming increasingly important nationally and to the Office of Education. This is due in large part to the dedicated efforts of the Council for Exceptional Children and The Association for the Gifted. I continue to hear from the States of new legislation, services, workshops, and conferences about the gifted. In each of the ten Regional Offices of Education we have a Program Officer for the Gifted and Talented, and in Washington we have the Office for Gifted and Talented--an important part of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. Through the Office for Gifted and Talented and its leadership training institute, by the summer of 1975 we will have trained teams of five change agents from every State and Territory in the country. We intend to continue to be national advocates in behalf of our most valuable and too often neglected national resource--our 2 million gifted and talented youths.

The Office of Education needs tc improve its capacity to develop data on the number of children requiring special education services and the number of such children receiving them in any given State. We must also have some better estimates on the costs of special education. These data, never before available nationally or even on a State basis, will become increasingly necessary as national and State governments attempt to come to terms with the intricate process of educating children with a variety of handicaps in a variety of educational settings, from special schools through short-term special assistance in a regular school. I have already authorized BEH to begin identifying in detai'. its requirements for data.

One major improvement in our ability to administer programs for education of the handicapped has already begun. We are strengthening the role of BEH by making it a major administrative unit reporting directly to the Commissioner's Office rather than part of a larger unit reporting through a Deputy Commissioner. This will assure direct participation by the head of the Bureau in the policy deliberations that lead to the establishment of priorities, the development of a budget, and so forth.

We are also beginning to consolidate under the direction of BEH the administration of various programs for the handicapped authorized by education legislation other than the Education of the Handicapped Act.

In summary, it is no longer enough just to affirm that handicapped children have a right to an education. That affirmation must be turned into the reality of good education. The Federal Government has supported and will continue to support the research, the demonstration projects, and the teacher training that will help bring about this reality.

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